

# MAN of the WORLD

ISSUE NO. 14



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**I**t shows that there is going to be another generation of actors who will take care of Hollywood when Tom Hanks decides to say, "I'm done."

Hand-stained leather and rope artist: GREG LAUREN  
light tan trousers: SAGE KHAKI, oxford shoes: PANTHERELLA  
berkeley iron range: steelstone leather boots: REDWING HERITAGE  
grooming: SHIVANA  
art design: BRYN BOWEN  
location: BIG SKY RANCH

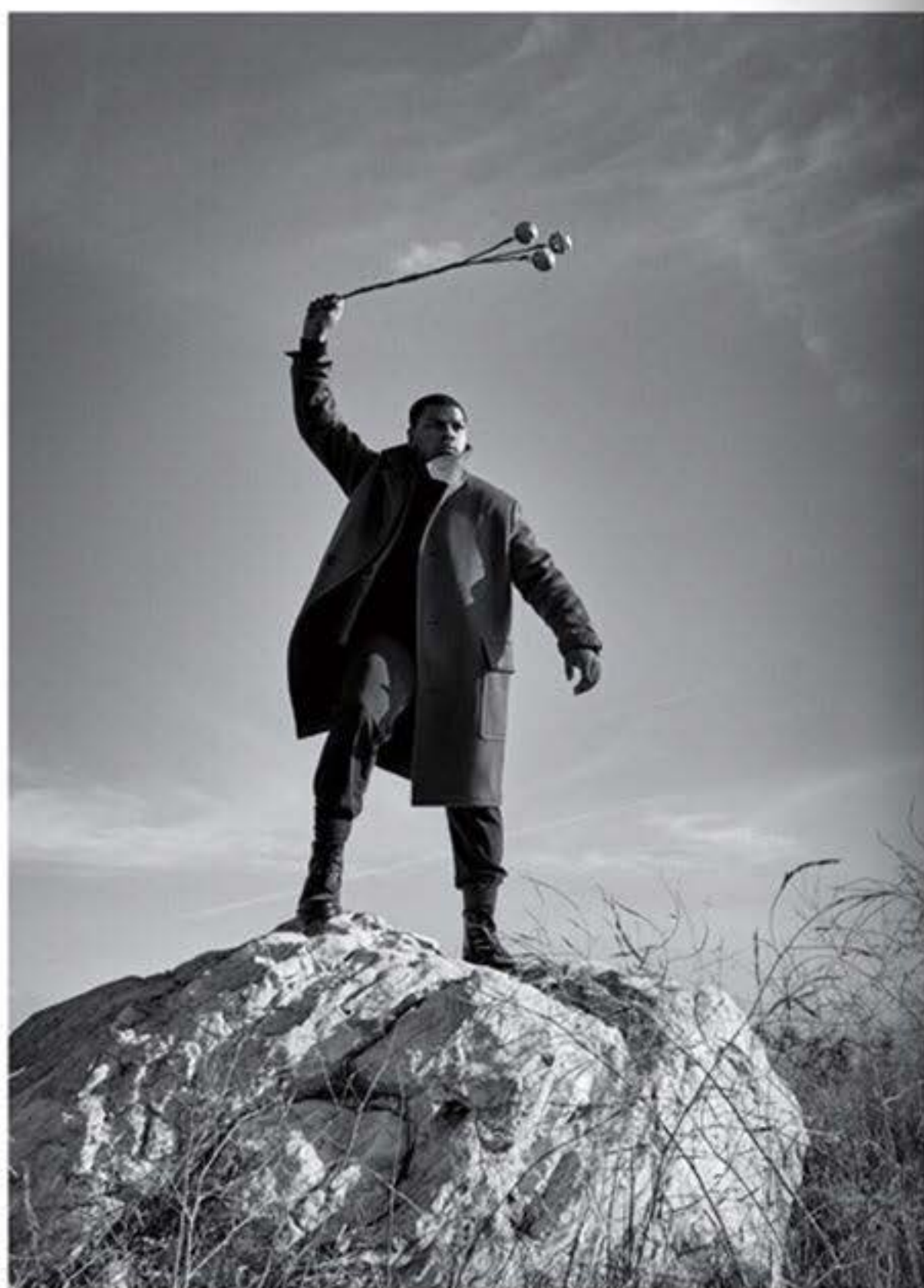
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*Teige double undercoat sport coat HERMÈS charcoal duffle work jacket  
GREG LAUREN and crew-neck raglan sweater TODD SNYDER x  
CHAMPION brown light trail trousers SAVE KHAKI no. 8 buckle belt  
KIKI NY egyptian cotton neck PANTHERELLA black calf leather derby  
CERRUTI 1886 PARIS*

*previous spread: Brown leather panther jacket WEI STAFF long-sleeve slim denim  
pants in the 90s and netting vest GREG LAUREN and suit with double-breasted  
jacket CERRUTI 1886 PARIS over turtleneck in hazy, ethereal mood in the leather boots  
RED WING HERITAGE, suede ankle boots BARTON PEREIRA*

**O**n a ranch in California's drought-ravaged Simi Valley, John Boyega, the promising young actor at the center of the latest *Star Wars* film, stands atop a jagged rock twirling a *boleadora*.

The crew is cracking jokes—"Those are some big balls"—especially after Boyega has to duck to keep from bruising himself. His default facial expression resembles that of a homicide detective about to solemnly pronounce that the victim has been found ten miles west of here, but he cracks a wide smile. Moments later, he's swinging his ceramic balls like a leather-necked gaucho. At the tender age of twenty-three, this kid knows his way around a prop.

With the release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, and his debut as Stormtrooper Finn, just two months away, this is Boyega's life now—standing on a precipice, for the most part utterly cool, but here and there breaking into a grin that spreads like sunlight and offering wry observations in his clipped London accent. Though filming wrapped last November, you could say that his time spent dodging projectiles isn't exactly over—ragged bits of space junk are still flying at him as his career goes into overdrive. *The Force Awakens* and its follow-up episode, which is already being filmed, are his biggest concerns at the moment, but there's also *The Circle*, a movie based on the Dave Eggers novel, in which Boyega performs alongside Tim Hanks and Emma Watson.

Still, *Star Wars*, or more specifically its frenzied fan base, is coming for Boyega. On this warm afternoon, some thirty miles north of Los Angeles, it all seems galaxies away. "Oh, it's already here," Boyega assures me at one point, just a touch of panic in his voice. And he's right. The latest *Force Awakens* trailer will catch fire on YouTube the following day, racking up more than fifty million views. A clip of Boyega watching it, freaking out to the point where he flips over the top of his couch, will be liked nearly 1.3 million times on Facebook. Is he ready for the mania, the fanboy flailing, the action-figure dolls that his parents are already stockpiling?

One would think. After all, this is the guy whom director J.J. Abrams ran through a grueling seven-month gauntlet before he gave him the part. This is the actor who's already starred in films as diverse as *Half of a Yellow Sun*, based on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel, and the cheeky alien invasion movie, *Attack the Block*, which earned Abrams' interest in the first place. He's been immersed in performance since he was a kid running around Peckham, an ethnically mixed neighborhood in southeast London. None of his success is by accident. His IMDb page is only a dozen or so credits long, but he belongs here.

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Normal office under her WORTH & WORTH house till morning trench coat and house and staff DUNHILL, too the entire under EILSON

After the shoot, we sit together in a brightly lit trailer in matching director chairs as Boyega traces his performance roots. He can't pick a first love because he started doing all of it so young: tap dancing, painting, "a bit of ballet," Shakespeare, musical theater. The kids of Poshhans, by Boyega's account, were an unusually creative bunch.

"We had a really nice garden and woods and in the middle of those woods was a theater, just two minutes away from me, so I would be there every week. It felt like God just planned it there on purpose," he says.

Fairly, as you might have gathered, has played an important role in Boyega's life. His parents, Nigerian immigrants who settled in London several years before he was born, not only encouraged community within the arts but also at his father's Pentecostal church. (His two older sisters are named Grace and Blessing.) Boyega didn't attend services because his dad was the minister; he went because it was fun.

"It was a very vibrant environment," he says. "I had a great time growing up there. I learned how to play the drum kit in church for praise and worship. I got involved in a lot of the drama we'd do for the parents on kids' day." He pauses, his eyebrows knitted together, and then continues: "I was a very busy child, when I think about it."

Has he always had a lot of energy?

"No, I'm just young," he says.

He bursts out laughing: "Well, I'm young, and I train five days a week."

OK, so maybe he's a little cocky. In person, it's quite charming. It's not every day you meet an actor who knows he's on the rise. There's usually the doubt, the gripping paranoia that things could peter out at any time without rhyme or reason. Instead, Boyega says things like, "I'm a very determined person so I would never have felt comfortable going for anything but the main guy."

Perhaps it's his solid sense of purpose that allowed him to easily dismiss the troll-calls of fans who protested the idea of a non-white *Sherlock*. Boyega handily shut them down: "Get used to it," he wrote with a smug face on Instagram. Today, he's even blunter.

"We wrapped on the film already, sooo..." he says, with a smile and a hush, summing up the whole inane non-controversy.

Boyega says that he cried the first time he read the script, not because of the story per se, but because he flicked through the pages and was astounded to see his character's name appear over and over again. "It's good to know that people believe in you, and that's what made me get teary-eyed."

With a mischievous look on his face, he clarifies: "I mean, a tear didn't actually drop out of my eye, but, you know, it sort of hung in the balance."

Asked if he believes he's living through a particularly progressive time in Hollywood, Boyega says: "I don't know. This is my first experience with anything of this magnitude and scale. I'm just appreciative to be an actor who's involved in a fantastic project. My concentration isn't on any of that stuff—it just isn't. My concentration is on the fact that this is all so exciting, especially standing on set, being with Harrison Ford, Mark Hamill, Carrie Fisher, all the people who had been there before. To be a part of a movement that's bringing on a new generation of actors is fantastic."

"I'm a very determined person so I would never have felt comfortable going for anything but the main guy," says Boyega.

Boyega goes on to name several other actors he's excited about, all young, all male: Ansel Elgort, Miles Teller, Eddie Redmayne, Malachi Kirby, who was recently cast as Kunta Kinte in ABC's reboot of *River*, and Jack O'Connell, from the beloved British teen drama *Shame*, and, more recently, *Umbrella*.

"It's been very cool watching all these guys go from one project to another," he says. "It shows that there is going to be another generation of actors who will take care of Hollywood when Tom Hanks decides to say, 'I'm done.'"

Perhaps Boyega, the child of immigrants, knows what it means to fight for your right to belong in the most sacred of stories. "We weren't taught any specific path but hard work and respect," he says. "In terms of moving to London and immigration and all that kind of stuff, my dad couldn't care less. He would tell us, 'You're here, you were born here, you don't have to worry about this stuff.'"

Over the next several months of madness, Boyega will remain in London, near his family. One of his sisters has been trying to crack his character's backstory by asking him questions about Fint's last name. Is it Skywalker, by any chance? He's tight-lipped, so she'll have to wait until they all see *The Force Awakens* together on the big screen, as Boyega plans.

Until then, he says, "I'm just in my own normal bubble that I was in before." When it gets pinched, the power of community will keep him strong. "Of the people that I grew up with in the Pentecostal church, some of them are my biggest champions when it comes to my life and my career. They send consistent prayers for my success."

The forces, it turns out, are legion.

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*Featured in this issue: GREG LAUREN and over 100  
other men: TODD SNYDER, CHAMPION light rail train  
SAVY KHAKI as 100% KIKUYU*

“**I**n the middle of those woods was a theater. It felt like God just planted it there on purpose.”



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